

Your Cottage, Pollution, and You.

Pamphlet
1973



Cottage pollution control survey

Today's cottage owner is a fortunate individual. Ontario's lakes are dotted with over 250,000 cottages and more and more people are leaving the cares of the city to enjoy the best the province has to offer — an abundance of recreational waters. It's healthy, fun-filled activity.

But, there is a problem. Unchecked contamination of the lakes threatens these beneficial activities. Pollution problems can be avoided, however. It is just a question of responsible control. Basically the problem is this: the population around the lakes has greatly increased; these people are using more and more water, and too often the sewage is returned to the lakes without proper treatment. Soon, the lake water is too polluted to treat for drinking or to provide the best game fish. In some situations it may not be suitable for

swimming. Ailing waters can be improved if the source of the trouble is identified and checked.

The Ministry of the Environment is active in this area of pollution control and is asking your help. These are your problems too and each cottage presents its own unique set of problems. Therefore, the Ministry's program is geared to individual attention. By working together, the cottager and Ministry staff are actively fighting the ugly menace of pollution.

The control program

The Ministry launched the program some years ago. The initial step of this cottage pollution control program is a sanitary survey of the cottages and other establishments on a given lake or series of lakes. The purpose is to detect and correct faulty sewage disposal systems or practices. In order to do this the Ministry must collect information about the waste disposal methods used at the establishments in the area.

When they knock on your door, members of the survey team will want to know or obtain

- Name and address of the registered owner (permanent mailing address).
- Number of occupants at the cottage during summer and winter.
- Details of plumbing installation, if any (i.e. pressure water system, shower, type of indoor toilet).
- Location, size and age of septic tank and tilefield, well, cesspool, leaching pit, pit privy, etc.

- Topography of the lot with details of soil cover, soil type, depth of water table or impervious layer of soil, etc.
- Samples of drinking water (for testing).
- Shoreline samples of water to determine the quality of water adjacent to the shore.
- Sketch of the property showing relative position of all buildings to septic tank, tile field, well, lake, property lines, etc.
- If you have reason to suspect that your sewage system may be malfunctioning in any way, e.g. effluent ponding or discharging onto the ground surface? Details?

Please help your survey crew. Try to have as much of this information ready for them as you can when you find out that your lake is being surveyed. They'll need just half an hour of your time.

Data and samples obtained during the survey are analyzed to assess whether treatment or disposal facilities are adequate or not. If not, an abatement technician will verify the original findings and recommendations. If verified, he will contact the owner to discuss and arrange an abatement program.

There are the usual steps:

- Notify the owner of deficiencies in present treatment or disposal facilities.
- Discuss corrections required.
- Obtain a firm commitment from the owner to have recommended abatement measures carried out in a reasonable length of time.
- Approve plans of the proposed work (if required).
- Arrange for inspections during construction.
- Carry out final inspection after completion of work.

Help Yourself

The most common pollution problem in the cottage country is the seemingly innocent disposal of kitchen, bath or laundry waste

water onto the ground. Although the kitchen sink or washbasin waste appear innocent they are a public health nuisance when exposed on the ground and account for about half of the work of our abatement technicians. Ideally the disposal of these wastes should be into your septic tank system — contrary to popular belief, in a properly designed system they do not interfere with bacterial action in the tank. A well designed and maintained sewage system will last many years and will not pollute the lakes. Here are some other things you can do to safeguard your enjoyment of your cottage property:

- Stop using detergents at inland recreational lakes, use soap instead. Most lake-water in these areas is soft, and detergent are unnecessary.
- Use water wisely. Economical use of water will do a lot to cut down the volume of water for disposal.
- Don't use fertilizers around the cottage. The nutrients washing into the lake during periods of surface run-off are harmful.
- Check your sewage system for signs of liquid ponding on the tile bed, or of break out from the beds.
- Don't wash in the lake or at the shore.
- Take your garbage where it belongs, to a proper dump or receptacle. Left on your lot, it may eventually pollute your shoreline, because of seepage and surface action of wind and rain.
- Have your septic tank inspected every 2-3 years, and pumped out if needed.
- Protect the tile field from vehicles which will likely break the tiles.
- Plant grass in the tile bed area in order to use up nutrients and protect the surface from erosion.

Be kind to your environment and it will faithfully serve you and your neighbors.



Ontario

For more information write:
Ministry of the Environment,
Information Services Branch,
135 St. Clair Avenue West,
Toronto, Ontario M4V 1P5

Ministry of the Environment
Hon. James A. C. Auld, Minister
Everett Biggs, Deputy Minister

This publication is printed on recycled paper.
Please keep recycling it — pass it on to a friend.

Copyright Provisions and Restrictions on Copying:

This Ontario Ministry of the Environment work is protected by Crown copyright (unless otherwise indicated), which is held by the Queen's Printer for Ontario. It may be reproduced for non-commercial purposes if credit is given and Crown copyright is acknowledged.

It may not be reproduced, in all or in part, for any commercial purpose except under a licence from the Queen's Printer for Ontario.

For information on reproducing Government of Ontario works, please contact ServiceOntario Publications at copyright@ontario.ca